U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2005-149-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): COC39349 (ROW)
COC060738 (Well No. 22-6)

PROJECT NAME: Stake Springs Power Line Re-Route and Williams 22-6-298

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T. 2 S., R 98 W., Sec. 6, lot 2, 3, SE¼NW¼, 6th P.M.

APPLICANT: White River Electric Association, Inc., Williams Production RMT Company

ISSUES AND CONCERNS (optional): A separate ROW application for the pipeline route will be submitted by Bargath, Inc. The onsite for this location did not include a pipeline ROW, and a pipeline route was not discussed.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: An application has been received for the re-routing of a segment of power line in Stake Springs Draw and constructing a well pad and access road. Basin big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* subsp. *tridentata*) is the dominant vegetation at the proposed location. The elevation at the proposed location for well 22-6 is 6,513 feet. Well density at the proposed location is <1 producing wells per square mile, while road density equals approximately 1.74 miles of road per square mile.

Proposed Action: The proposed action includes re-routing a segment of single-phase overhead distribution power line. In addition, the applicant proposes to construct one well pad with dimensions of 200 x 300 feet (1.38 acres). Total area disturbed including overburden to construct the well pad will be approximately 1.58 acres. The applicant proposes to construct 35 x 50 feet (.04 acres) of new road to access the proposed location. Total area disturbed to accommodate both well pad and access road will be approximately 1.62 acres. The power line re-route will be approximately 2,460 feet and will allow Williams Exploration & Production adequate and safe clearance to construct the well pad for well 22-6. Wooden poles will be used instead of steel, due to the ease of climbing when access is restricted and wooden poles are less expensive and more readily available. The re-route will be adding 7 poles and replacing 1 pole. Equipment to be used will be a 2-ton, 4-wheel drive digger/derrick truck and basic utility trucks. Construction will take 2 days to complete. Due to terrain and the heavy growth of sage and

greasewood, the right-of-way will be mowed in a mosaic pattern as has been done on the rest of the power line.

The single-phase line is considered electrically safe for perching raptors, however, if there are grouse leks in the area, White River will mitigate these structures.

Plans for improvement and/or maintenance of existing roads are to maintain in as good or better conditions than at present. Access roads and surface disturbing activities will conform to standards outlined in the USGS publication (1978) Surface Operation Standards for Oil and Gas Development.

Produced waste water could be confined to the pit for a period of 90 days after initial production. During the 90 day period the required waste analysis will be submitted for the Authorized Officer's approval, pursuant to Onshore Oil and Gas Order No. 7 (NTL-2B). A permanent steel tank will be installed in the ground next to the production facilities to contain any produced water for the duration of the well.

Water based reserve pit fluids will be backfilled within one year of construction or by the end of the succeeding summer to allow for evaporation of fluids unless an alternative method of disposal is approved. The backfilling of the reserve pit will be done in such a manner that the mud and associated solids will be confined to the pit and not squeezed out and incorporated into the surface materials. There will be a minimum of three feet of cover (overburden) on the pit. All remaining cutting will be solidified and buried in place, or disposed of in an approved manner. The stockpiled ground cover will be evenly distributed over the disturbed areas. The recommended seed mix to be used on all disturbed areas will be determined by the White River Field Office. The dirt contractor will be provided with an approved copy of the surface use plan.

Chemical pesticides or any other control agent which represents a potential soil, air or water pollutant will not be utilized for any purpose on public lands without express written authorization from the Authorized Officer of the BLM.

The Operator or his contractor will notify the BLM, White River Field Office, (970) 878-3800, forty-eight (48) hours before starting reclamation work that involves earth-moving equipment and upon completion of restoration measures.

During the environmental assessment process for this area, cultural resource clearance inventories were prepared and have been submitted under separate cover dated 10 December 2004 by Grand River Institute. Paleo, raptor and threatened and endangered species surveys have been done for the proposed location.

The anticipated start date is 1 June 2005. The anticipated duration for construction related activities is 45-60 days which includes drilling and completion.

No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative, the application would be denied and the power line would remain in its present location, and the well pad and access road would not be constructed.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD:

NEED FOR THE ACTION: An application has been received for the amendment of an existing right-of-way COC39349.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Pages 2-49 thru 2-52

Decision Language: "To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values."

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: The proposed actions are not located within a twenty mile radius of any special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas. Construction of well pad, access road, and power line re-route will have little effect on air quality in the area with exception to dry periods when gusty winds may temporarily increase fugitive dust levels. Overall, construction operations should not greatly compromise National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for particulate mater which calls for a maximum 24-hour average to be less than or equal to 150 $\mu g/m^3$.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Temporary reductions in vegetal cover resulting from construction activities will leave soils temporarily exposed to eolian processes. During dry and windy periods, air quality may be compromised due to increased levels of fugitive dust originating from the exposed construction area. However, airborne particulate matter should not exceed Colorado air quality standards on an hourly or daily basis.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Revegetate surfaces disturbed during construction. Apply adequate ground cover (e.g. woody debris) to minimize surface exposure to eolian processes. Dust abatement (spreading water) will be required during dry periods.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The location of the proposed reroute of the power line, new pole placement, and well pad and access road appear to be in an area that has been inventoried at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level (Conner et al 2004, Compliance Dated 12.14.2004) with no cultural resources identified in the inventoried area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: It does not appear that the proposed action will impact any known cultural resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has

been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: There are no known noxious weeds at the project site. The invasive alien cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) is present on site as a function of historical grazing and unrevegetated soil disturbance.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will create about 1.62 acres of earthen disturbance, which if it is not revegetated with desirable species and /or treated with herbicides to eradicate cheatgrass, will be invaded and dominated by cheatgrass, increasing the potential for fire and the consequent further proliferation of cheatgrass. The resulting proliferation of cheatgrass will perpetuate a downward cycle of environmental degradation that will be largely irreversible.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: All areas of soil disturbance will be promptly revegetated using Native Seed Mix #5. WREA will be responsible for seeding any disturbance associated with the powerline reroute. Williams will be responsible for revegetation of all disturbed areas associated with the well and access road.

Seed Mix #	Species (Variety)	Lbs. PLS per Acre	Ecological Sites
5	Basin Wildrye (Magnar) Western wheatgrass (Rosanna, Arriba) Bluebunch wheatgrass (Secar) Thickspike wheatgrass (Critana) Fourwing saltbush (Wytana) Alternates: Utah sweetvetch, globemallow	2 3 1 2 1	Foothill Swale, Sandy Swale, Swale Meadow

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The proposed action is encompassed largely by basin big sagebrush with low densities of greasewood scattered throughout. Herbaceous ground cover is comprised of western wheatgrass, basin wild rye, Sandberg bluegrass and squirreltail. Blue-gray gnatcatcher, Brewer's sparrow and Vesper's sparrow are associated with these habitats although

these shrublands typically support few nesting birds. There are no species of high conservation interest associated with this project.

The project area is located in the Stake Springs Draw drainage and open water and wetland areas that may support or attract waterfowl occur within this drainage. The development of reserve pits in the Stake Springs Draw drainage that contain drilling fluids may also attract waterfowl for purposes of resting and/or foraging.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: It is unlikely that well pad and road construction would have any negative impacts on nesting activities. Moreover, the proposed project area occurs along an existing road and in areas of degraded migratory breeding bird habitat with low shrub densities. These habitats typically support little, if any nesting birds.

It has recently been brought to BLM's attention that in certain situations migratory waterfowl (i.e., teal and gadwall) have contacted oil-based drilling fluids stored in reserve pits during or after completion operations and are suffering mortality in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The extent and nature of the problem is not well defined, but is being actively investigated by the federal agencies and the companies. Until the vectors of mortality are better understood, management measures must be conservative and relegated to preventing bird contact with oil-based drilling fluids that may pose a problem.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no affect on migratory birds or their habitats under the no action alternative.

Mitigation: Pits remaining after the drilling period which store or are expected to store production fluids will be wired or netted to prevent or discourage entry by larger birds attracted to sources of water, including raptors and waterfowl. At a minimum, wire will be stretched over the entire length and breadth of the pit at intervals not exceeding three feet, and made permanently conspicuous either by choice of material or installation of flagging material evenly distributed across the pit at a minimum rate of one flag per 18 square feet.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered animals that inhabit or derive important benefit from these sites.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on special status animals or associated habitat.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The no action alternative would have no conceivable influence on special status animals or associated habitat.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: The proposed action would have no effective influence on populations or habitat associated with special status species.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: Surface Water: The proposed power line re-route and well 22-6 (including access) is located in the Stake Springs catchment area (stream segment 13b) which is a tributary to Yellow Creek (tributary to the White River). A review of the Colorado's 1989 Nonpoint Source Assessment Report (plus updates), the 305(b) report, the 303(d) list and the Unified Watershed Assessment was done to see if any water quality concerns have been identified. The State has classified stream segment 13b of the White River Basin as "Use Protected" and further designated as beneficial for the following uses: Warm Aquatic Life 2, Recreation 2, and Agriculture. The antidegredation review requirements in the Antidegredation Rule are not applicable to waters designated use-protected. For those waters, only the protection specified in each reach will apply. For this reach, minimum standards for three parameters have been listed. These parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 5.0 mg/l, pH = 6.5 - 9.0, Fecal Coliform = 2000/100 ml, and 630/100 ml E. coli. It should be noted that Yellow Creek has been identified as a perennial stream NOT meeting water quality standards with regards to salinity and suspended sediment.

Ground Water: The proposed well pad location is situated near the mouth of a significant draw. Local ground water may be encountered at this location during wet periods when water tables are elevated. In addition, deeper aquifers will be encountered during the drilling process.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Construction of the access road and well pad will result in temporary exposure of soils to erosional processes. Removal of ground cover would likely increase erosive potential due to runoff and raindrop impact during storm events.

Soil compaction may occur in response to heavy equipment associated with the power-line re-route. Increased soil compaction will elevate potential for erosive overland flows which will introduce sediment into the stream channel.

Elevated water tables during wet periods (spring run-off) may result in ponding at the well pad. If ponding occurs, ground water being discharged onto the well pad will likely contact environmentally unfriendly substances leaked or spilled on the pad. Contaminated water from the well pad will likely deteriorate water quality down gradient the pad. Local ground water may also be contaminated if a spill results or pit contents are allowed to infiltrate soils. Adverse impacts on deeper ground water are possible as a result of cross aquifer contamination due to drilling.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: To mitigate surface erosion due to removal of ground cover at the well pad, it is recommended stockpiled soils be covered and silt fences be used on down gradient sides. It is also recommended that upon reclamation flow deflectors and sediment traps (woody debris) be redistributed over the area along with seed (Native Seed mix #5). Also, in constructing the access road, proper drainage structures (drain dips, culverts) must be installed to reduce further surface erosion. Soil compaction may be mitigated by minimizing the amount of utility vehicle traffic associated with the power line re-route.

To mitigate contamination of local ground water, environmentally unfriendly substances (e.g. diesel) must not be allowed to contact soils. The use of impermeable matting under equipment is suggested to intercept such contaminants prior to contacting soils.
Furthermore, all pits must be lined and all wastes associated with construction and drilling will be properly treated and disposed of. Finally, aquifers beneficial for human consumption and livestock encountered during the drilling process must be properly sealed to reduce potential for contamination.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: The White River Resource Area RMP has identified Yellow Creek as NOT meeting water quality standards for suspended sediment and salinity. Upstream activities like the proposed actions will have a direct influence on water quality in the lower reaches. However, if proper mitigation techniques are followed precisely, water quality in stream segment 13b will not be compromised.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: The area adjacent to the proposed project area does not support riparian or wetland communities. Furthermore, riparian or wetland communities will not be directly involved or potentially affected by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on riparian or wetland communities.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The no-action alternative would not have any conceivable influence on riparian or wetland communities.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: This project would have no conceivable potential for influencing riparian attributes addressed in the Standards.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED: No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, Wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers, threatened, endangered or sensitive plants exist within the area affected by the proposed action. For threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species Public Land Health Standard is not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status plants. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action."

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The proposed actions will not encounter any fragile soils. The following data is a product of an order III soil survey conducted by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The accompanying table highlights important soil characteristics. A complete summary of this information can be found at the White River Field Office.

Soil Number	Soil Name	Slope	Ecological site	Salinity	Run Off	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
36	Glendive fine sandy loam		Foothills Swale	2-4	Slow	Slight	>60
73	Rentsac channery loam	5-50%	Pinyon-Juniper woodlands	<2	Rapid	Moderate to very high	10-20"
91	Torriorthents-Rock Outcrop complex	15-90%	Stoney Foothills		Rapid	Very high	10-20"

36-Glendive fine sandy loam is a deep, well drained soil is along drainage ways on alluvial valley floors. It formed in alluvium. Areas are long and narrow and are 20 to 150 acres in size. Slope is 2 to 4 percent. Typically, the surface layer is pale brown fine sandy loam 6 inches thick. The underlying material to a depth of 60 inches or more is very pale brown, stratified fine sandy loam that has thin lenses of loamy fine sand to sandy clay loam. The soil is calcareous throughout. In some areas the surface layer is channery fine sandy loam. Permeability of this Glendive soil is moderately rapid. Available water capacity is moderate. Effective rooting depth is 60 inches or more. Runoff is slow, and the hazard of water erosion is slight. The soil is subject to rare periods of flooding.

*73-Rentsac channery loam (*5 to 50 percent slopes) is a shallow, well drained soil is on ridges, foothills, and side slopes. It formed in residuum derived dominantly from calcareous sandstone. Areas are elongated and are 200 to 5,000 acres. The native vegetation is mainly pinyon, juniper, brush, and grasses. Typically, the surface layer is grayish brown channery loam about 5 inches thick. The next layer is very channery loam about 4 inches thick. The underlying material is extremely flaggy light loam 7 inches thick. Hard sandstone is at a depth of 16 inches. Depth to sandstone ranges from 10 to 20 inches. Permeability of this Rentsac soil is moderately rapid. Available water capacity is very low. Effective rooting depth is 10 to 20 inches. Runoff is rapid, and the hazard of water erosion is moderate to very high.

*91-Torriorthents-Rock outcrop complex (*15 to 90 percent slopes) can be found on extremely rough and eroded areas on mountains, hills, ridges, and canyon sides. Slopes mainly face south. The native vegetation is mainly sparse shrubs and grasses with some pinyon and juniper trees. .

This unit is 50 percent Torriorthents that have slopes of 15 to 65 percent and 30 percent Rock outcrop that has slopes of 35 to 90 percent. Torriorthents are very shallow to moderately deep and are will drained and somewhat excessively drained. They formed in residuum and colluvium derived dominantly from sandstone, shale, limestone, and siltstone. Torriorthents are highly variable. No single profile of Torriorthents is typical, but one commonly observed in the survey area has a surface layer of pale brown channery loam about 3 inches thick. The underlying material is very pale brown channery loam, very channery loam, or fine sandy loam about 13 inches thick. Shale or sandstone is at a depth of 16 inches. Torriorthents are calcareous throughout. In some areas the surface layer is stony or flaggy. Permeability of the Torriorthents is moderate. Available water capacity is very low. Effective rooting depth is 10 to 20 inches. Runoff is very rapid, and the hazard of water erosion is very high.

Rock outcrop consists of barren escarpments, ridge caps, and points of sandstone, shale, limestone, or siltstone. The escarpments are 3 to 50 feet thick and 25 to 2,500 feet long.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Given the calcareous nature of the soils affected by the proposed action, dissolution of calcium carbonate will cause soil piping and gully formation if drainage structures are inadequate. If left unattended piping and gully formation can cause substantial erosional problems. Removal of limited ground cover will also expose soils to erosional processes. Heavy traffic will increase soil compaction decreasing infiltration rates which in turn will increase potential for erosive overland flows.

Leaks or spills of environmentally unfriendly substances on or near the pad may contaminate soils hindering revegetation efforts. Soils unable to support a healthy plant community will be less cohesive (due to lack of root structure) and more vulnerable to erosional processes.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Comply with "Gold Book" surface operating standards for constructing well pad and access road. Revegetate all disturbed surfaces following construction with Native Seed Mix #5 of the White River Resource Area. Flow deflectors and sediment traps (woody debris) must also be utilized in attempts to mitigate erosive potential of overland flows.

To mitigate contamination of soils and local ground water, environmentally unfriendly substances (e.g. diesel) must not be allowed to contact soils. The use of impermeable matting under equipment is suggested to intercept such contaminants prior to contacting soils.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: At the present time, soils in the vicinity of the proposed action exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, landform, climate, and geologic processes. The proposed actions will cause decreases in both infiltration and permeability rates due to soil compaction. However, the affected area is small and following mitigation/reclamation, no long term adverse environmental impacts relating to soil health are anticipated.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed location is just off the County road in Stake Springs Draw. The existing vegetation is dominated by basin big sagebrush and greasewood with an understory of cheatgrass and perennial grasses and forbs. The ecological site is a Foothill Swale, in an early seral state.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The primary impact of the proposed action upon vegetation will be the physical destruction of vegetation on about 1.62 acres. If operations occur from May through November, truck traffic on access roads will create a large amount of airborne dust which will be deposited on vegetation adjacent to roads. These deposits will impair plant function and also limit/prevent use of the vegetation by native and domestic herbivores.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: All areas of soil disturbance will be promptly revegetated using Native Seed Mix #5 above. WREA will be responsible for seeding any disturbance associated with the powerline reroute. Williams will be responsible for revegetation of all disturbed areas associated with the well and access road.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial)*:*): Vegetation in the project area currently meets the Standard on a watershed and landscape basis and is expected to continue to meet the Standard in the future following implementation of the proposed action.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: There are no aquatic habitats directly involved or potentially affected by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on aquatic wildlife or habitats.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The no-action alternative would not have any conceivable influence on aquatic wildlife or habitats.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): This project would have no conceivable potential for influencing aquatic wildlife or habitats addressed in the Standards.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The project area is located within mule deer severe winter range, which is typically used heavily by deer during the late winter months. One of the most important functions of these ranges is fulfilled during the early spring periods (late March through early May) when big game are most vulnerable to the influences of poor nutrition and extraneous energy demands (e.g., winter season recovery, last stages of gestation). There is no suitable nesting substrate available for raptors within 1,000 feet of the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will involve the disturbance/removal of basin big sagebrush and greasewood, species which do not constitute prime forage for big game. Reclamation of these sites would likely provide herbaceous ground cover which would be particularly beneficial to big game during the spring months.

The prevailing 2004/2005 winter weather conditions have been marked by unseasonably mild temperatures, including diminished snow pack and early emergence of herbaceous forage. Deer appear to be in remarkably good condition for this time of year. It is recommended that no condition of approval be applied to this action as these conditions meet the exception criteria for the WRFO severe winter range timing limitation stipulation. By implementing reclamation measures recommended in the mitigation section, short and long term habitat integrity, particularly for big game, would remain essentially unaffected.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Failing to construct the well pad and access road would maintain the current condition and functional qualities of the project area.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): This project should have no conceivable influence on the condition or function of terrestrial habitats or wildlife associated with these habitats and therefore, would have no influence on continued maintenance of associated land health standards.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation			X
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management		X	
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals			X
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Noise		X	
Paleontology			X
Rangeland Management		X	
Realty Authorizations			X
Recreation			X
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses		X	

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located within an area designated as open seasonally of motorized vehicles. The area is closed to cross-country motorized travel from October 1 through April 30 of each year. Rio Blanco County road 91 is the primary access to this location.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Rio Blanco County road 91 will likely see an increase in heavy vehicle traffic during the construction and drilling phases of the proposed well. No additional public access will be created by this action.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None.

GEOLOGY AND MINERALS

Affected Environment: William's well # 22-6-298 is located in the area identified in the RMP as available for open pit oil shale leasing and sodium leasing. The surface geologic formation of the well locations is Uinta alluvium and Williams's targeted zone is located in the lower Mesaverde/upper Mancos. During drilling potential water, oil shale, sodium, and gas zones will be encountered from surface to the targeted zone. Aquifers that will be encountered during drilling are the Perched in the Uinta, the A-groove, B-groove and the Dissolution Surface in the Green River formation. This area is also known for difficulties in drilling and cementing portions of the Green River and Wasatch formations. The well is located on federal oil and gas lease COC-060738

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Drilling and completion of this well may adversely affect the aquifers if there is loss of circulation or problems cementing the casing. However, the proposed cementing and completion for the surface casing of the action isolates the aquifers and should prevent the co-mingling of the water in the aquifers. The proposed cementing program for the production casing does not cover the Fort Union or Wasatch sands which have been identified as having potential gas and water zones that could commingle. Development of this well will deplete the hydrocarbon resources in the targeted formation.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: The cementing program of the production casing should attempt to cover the Fort Union and Wasatch formations.

PALEONTOLOGY

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located in an area generally mapped as part of the Unita Formation (Tweto 1979). However, with the project located in the bottom of Stake Springs Draw it is unlikely that the formation would be impacted by the reroute, especially if there is no bulldozing necessary to prepare a place for the new power pole.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action does not appear likely to impact scientifically important fossil resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to fossil resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing paleontological sites, or for collecting fossils. If fossil materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear to be of noteworthy scientific interest
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not feasible)

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS

Affected Environment: Due to the location of the well pad, the existing power line will have to be re-routed.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will entail the re-routing of an existing power line (White River Electric COC39349) to avoid safety issues with the well pad for the Federal RGU 22-6. The power line needs to be moved far enough away, in case the derrick collapses, it won't hit the power line. The re-routed segment will be 2,460 feet in length with a 20 foot width encompassing 1.13 acres more or less and will be an amendment to the existing right-of-way.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: The stipulations contained in the original grant dated 05/14/85 will remain in full force and effect and apply to the amendment of right-of-way COC39349.

RECREATION

Affected Environment: The proposed action occurs within the White River Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA). BLM custodially manages the ERMA to provide for unstructured recreation activities such as hunting, dispersed camping, hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing and off-highway vehicle use.

The project area has been delineated a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class of Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM). SPM physical and social recreation setting is typically characterized by a natural appearing environment with few administrative controls, low interaction between users but evidence of other users may be present. SPM recreation experience is characterized by a high probability of isolation from the sights and sounds of humans that offers an environment that offers challenge and risk.

However, the project area currently resembles a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class of Roaded Natural (RN) due to other oil and gas exploration activities. RN physical and social recreation setting may have modifications which range from being easily noticed to strongly dominant to observers within the area. However, from sensitive travel routes and use areas these alterations would remain unnoticed or visually subordinate. There is strong evidence of designed roads and/or highways. Structures are generally scattered, remaining visually subordinate or unnoticed to the sensitive travel route observer. Structures may include utility corridors, microwave installations and so on. Frequency of contact is moderate to high on roads and low to moderate on trails and away from roads. RN recreation experience is characterized by a moderate probability of isolation from the sights and sounds of humans that offers an environment that offers challenge and risk.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The public will lose approximately 2 acres of dispersed recreation potential while wells are in operation. The public will most likely not recreate in the vicinity of these facilities and will be dispersed elsewhere. If action coincides with hunting seasons (September through November) it will most likely disrupt the experience sought by those recreationists.

With the introduction of new well pads and roads, an increase of traffic could be expected increasing the likihood of human interactions, the sights and sounds associated with the human environment and a less naturally appearing environment.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No loss of dispersed recreation potential and no impact to hunting recreationists.

Mitigation: None.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed action would be located in a VRM class III area. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action is located adjacent to an existing road that could be traveled by a casual observer. The proposed action

would be visible to a casual observer for a brief period of time. The proposed action would be on the same level as a casual observer with surrounding sagebrush vegetation with a backdrop of low ridges with scattered juniper. By painting all production facilities Juniper Green to blend with and mimic the surrounding vegetation, the level of change to the characteristic landscape should be less than moderate and the proposed action would not dominate the view of the casual observer. The standards of the VRM III classification would be retained.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts.

Mitigation: Paint all production facilities Juniper Green.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: This action is consistent with the scope of impacts addressed in the White River ROD/RMP. The cumulative impacts of these activities are addressed in the White River ROD/RMP for each resource value that would be affected by the proposed action.

REFERENCES CITED:

Conner, Carl E., Curtis Martin, Barbara Davenport and Nicole Darnell
2004 A Class III Cultural Resources Inventory for Eight Proposed Well Locations and Related Accesses in Rio Blanco and Garfield Counties, Colorado for Williams Production RMT Company. Grand River Institute, Grand Junction, Colorado.

Tweto, Odgen
1979 Geologic Map of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: None

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species, Vegetation, Rangeland Management
Brett Smithers	Natural Resource Specialist	Migratory Birds
Brett Smithers	Natural Resource Specialist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Bo Brown	Hazmat Collateral	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Brett Smithers	Natural Resource Specialist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Soils
Brett Smithers	Natural Resource Specialist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Dagget	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation
Keith Whitaker	Natural Resource Specialist	Visual Resources
Valerie Dobrich	Natural Resource Specialist	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2005-149-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the proposed action with the mitigation measures listed below.

MITIGATION MEASURES: 1. Revegetate surfaces disturbed during construction. Apply adequate ground cover (e.g. woody debris) to minimize surface exposure to eolian processes. Dust abatement (spreading water) will be required during dry periods.

2. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

3. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to

proceed by the authorized officer.

4. All areas of soil disturbance will be promptly revegetated using Native Seed Mix #5. WREA will be responsible for seeding any disturbance associated with the powerline reroute. Williams will be responsible for revegetation of all disturbed areas associated with the well and access road.

Seed Mix #	Species (Variety)	Lbs. PLS per Acre	Ecological Sites
5	Basin Wildrye (Magnar)Western wheatgrass (Rosanna, Arriba) Bluebunch wheatgrass (Secar) Thickspike wheatgrass (Critana) Fourwing saltbush (Wytana) Alternates: Utah sweetvetch, globemallow	2 3 1 2 1	Foothill Swale, Sandy Swale, Swale Meadow

5. Pits remaining after the drilling period which store or are expected to store production fluids will be wired or netted to prevent or discourage entry by larger birds attracted to sources of water, including raptors and waterfowl. At a minimum, wire will be stretched over the entire length and breadth of the pit at intervals not exceeding three feet, and made permanently conspicuous either by choice of material or installation of flagging material evenly distributed across the pit at a minimum rate of one flag per 18 square feet.

6. The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

7. To mitigate surface erosion due to removal of ground cover at the well pad, it is recommended stockpiled soils be covered and silt fences be used on down gradient sides. It is also recommended that upon reclamation flow deflectors and sediment traps (woody debris) be redistributed over the area along with seed (Native Seed mix #5). Also, in constructing the access road, proper drainage structures (drain dips, culverts) must be installed to reduce further surface erosion. Soil compaction may be mitigated by minimizing the amount of utility vehicle traffic associated with the power line re-route.

8. To mitigate contamination of local ground water, environmentally unfriendly substances (e.g. diesel) must not be allowed to contact soils. The use of impermeable matting under equipment is suggested to intercept such contaminants prior to contacting soils.
Furthermore, all pits must be lined and all wastes associated with construction and drilling will be properly treated and disposed of. Finally, aquifers beneficial for human consumption and livestock encountered during the drilling process must be properly sealed to reduce potential for contamination.

9. Comply with “Gold Book” surface operating standards for constructing well pad and access road. Revegetate all disturbed surfaces following construction with Native Seed Mix #5 of the White River Resource Area. Flow deflectors and sediment traps (woody debris) must also be utilized in attempts to mitigate erosive potential of overland flows.

10. To mitigate contamination of soils and local ground water, environmentally unfriendly substances (e.g. diesel) must not be allowed to contact soils. The use of impermeable matting under equipment is suggested to intercept such contaminants prior to contacting soils.

11. The cementing program of the production casing should attempt made to cover the Fort Union and Wasatch formations.

12. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing paleontological sites, or for collecting fossils. If fossil materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear to be of noteworthy scientific interest
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not feasible)

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

13. The stipulations contained in the original grant dated 05/14/85 will remain in full force and effect and apply to the amendment of right-of-way COC39349.

14. Paint all production facilities Juniper Green.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Compliance for the powerline will be conducted by the realty staff every five years.

NAME OF PREPARER: Brett Smithers

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Kent C. Walter
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 06/02/05

ATTACHMENTS: Map of the proposed action location.

Location of Proposed Action
CO-110-2005-149-EA